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Expression of Leaders' Spiritual Intelligence in a Context of Service Organizations: a Gender Approach

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Abstract

The paper is built on the analysis and synthesis of scientific literature with the aim to reveal the peculiarities of gendered leadership and spiritual intelligence in a context of the service quality of organization. The theoretical interaction model of leader's spiritual intelligence and the service quality of organization (Šilingienė, Škėrienė, 2014) was used as a framework for empirical research. A quantitative research by using a questionnaire-based survey was carried out with the aim to determine empirically the impact of gender for leaders' spiritual intelligence in a context of the service quality of organization. The main results identified some statistically significant difference. Men were found to score more highly than women did. Demographics other than gender (age, education, management experience) emerge as more significant influences (both women's and men's correlation coefficients were above 0.8) on the leaders' spiritual intelligence based attitudes, values and behaviors, and present detailed explanation of the identified links.

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Introduction

The complexity of the development of the modern society brings about major changes in the paradigm of management and results in the emergence of new, previously unknown configurations of the processes occurring in organizations. While the development, innovations, and changes of organizations require the leaders' ability to penetrate the organizations' links and associations in the context of the global system, these changes would also be

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impossible without the identification of new organization-transforming variables. The integration of ethical behavior, spiritual values and experience, and human spirituality-related positive motives for activity into the culture of business organizations is one of the new challenges whose realization requires new scientific insights, the traditional management techniques being clearly insufficient for this task. Spirituality and the issues of its development have been attracting increasing interest in the academic research of the early 21st century, which is evidenced by the introduction of a new term – spiritual intelligence (Emmons, 2000) – into the scientific thesaurus. Recently noticeable the growing interest among managers and leaders especially of spirituality at work. Zhurayleva-Todarello & More (2009) presented the insight that the origins of the spirituality construct are present in the longer evolution of organizational and management thought. That is why organizations need to look for the new ways of finding synergy between rational and spiritual aspects. The emergence of spiritual intelligence allowed the researchers to view the spiritual resources of an organization as a new form of capital, and spiritual leadership – as a new approach to the management tools used in an organization. Even though the organizational dimension of spirituality has not been widely developed in research, studies indicate that individual development helps to create the general spiritual capital at the organizational level, which in turn results in the emergence of the respective organizational practice (Middlebrooks & Noghiu, 2007). These researchers' insights provide a possibility for associating the spiritual capital with new micro-organizational processes as well as with the quality of an organization's services. Modern researchers of the internal processes of organizations emphasize that the associations of spiritual intelligence with the quality of an organization's services may positively affect the creation of an organization's value.

Even though research of spiritual intelligence is a relatively new field, but it has a wide spectrum of interests (Emmons, 2000; Sisk, 2002; Hyde, 2004; Zohar & Marshall, 2006; Ker-Dincer, 2007; King, 2008). There is also a prominent dimension of the research of spiritual intelligence in the context of leadership – especially when associating spiritual intelligence and the style of leadership (Sendjaya, 2007; Fry & Wigglesworth, 2010; Attri, 2012). Insights in this area open a possibility for associating spiritual intelligence with new variables that determine the success of leadership. As stated by Trinidad & Normore (2005), the real issue in leadership differences lies in the equity in selecting the right person with the appropriate skills and qualities to ensure the effectiveness and success of the organization. Authors pointed out that the presence of feminine or masculine characteristics in leadership styles is related to the construct of gender. According Young & Hurlic (2007), gender is institutionalized and affects how people think about all aspects of their lives and how members of society develop ideas, values about appropriate gender-related behavior, jobs, and activities. Thus, because of preliminary ideas about gender, behaviors of men and women in management positions must be interpreted differently. Gender influence usually considered in the context of leadership (Trinidad & Normore, 2005; Andersen & Hansson, 2010; Brinia, 2011; Powell, 2012; Arnold, Loughlin, 2013) and gender-related behavior to person-organizational fit and career decisions (Young & Hurlic, 2007). Thus, even though scientific discussions have presumed different approaches to the expression of gender in leadership over the recent years, studies most frequently focus on the search for common and different characteristics of male and female leaders, while more profound research in the expression of spiritual intelligence in the context of gender is missing. Thus, the lack of scientific data in regards to the impact of gender for leader's spiritual intelligence and service quality of organization links allows stating *the scientific problem*, answer to which will reveal is and how gender influence leader's spiritual intelligence and service quality of organization links.

The aim of the paper is to examine the peculiarities of gendered leadership and spiritual intelligence in a context of the service quality of organization.

Employed research methods are as follows: analysis and synthesis of scientific literature; quantitative research; descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation coefficient.

1. Theoretical background

Leader's spiritual intelligence research. The concept of spiritual intelligence (SI) is difficult to define. SI combines the constructs of spirituality and intelligence into a new construct. There is no one principal definition that outlines or describes what each of these constructs comprises. According Hyde (2004), since the notion of problem solving is one of the basic abilities of intelligence, this may indicate that spirituality could be conceived of as a form of intelligence. It reveals in the construct of SI introduced by Emmons (2000): (a) exist a set of skills and abilities

associated with spirituality which are relevant to intelligence, and (b) individual differences in these skills constitute core features of the person. The perception of SI conception of various scientists are caused of their activity, experience and understanding. SI enables people to develop an inner knowing, to see the big picture, to synthesize actions in relation to a meaning context, and to bring one's life into perspective (Sisk, 2002). Thus, developing SI is more of an experiential rather than a theoretical process; a process of personal insight and experience (Ker-Dincer, 2007). SI helps radically to change the thinking of business philosophical foundations and practice highlighting the opportunity to receive profit while doing business in a wider context of meaning and values (Zohar & Marshall, 2006).

The issue of empirical evaluation of SI is especially relevant in scientific discussions. The lack of consensus between the researchers of SI influences the variety of models and evaluation tools. Different authors suggest the theoretical SI models, but based on the assessment tools provides only a few. One of them is King (2008) presenting SISRI-24 model which could serve as a unifying concept for various other SI theories due to its holistic representation of current thought on SI theories.

Service quality of organization research. The importance of quality is presented as one of main factors creating competitive advantage since were presented that primary service expectations must be met or exceeded by perceived outcomes of the service experience. Mostly the service quality of organization has been analyzed from the perspective of consumers of certain organizational sectors only (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985; Urban, 2009). For a long time, quality management has yielded positive results, continuously providing new concepts, ideas, instruments, and techniques. However, the dynamically changing environment resulting in changing needs of the players in the environment also determines the need for a novel aspect of the quality of services. It has become important to understand how an organizational system affects customer quality perception (Urban, 2013). Particular attention should be paid to find the way to customers' value sphere by using existing direct interactions with customers (Grönroos, Voima, 2011). For these reasons, an organization needs leaders whose importance for the improvement of the service quality was already emphasized by Deming. Leadership and commitment to quality are essential for effective quality management: leaders influence the motivation of members of the organization and motivated them help to improve quality fulfillment (Laohavichien, Fredendall & Cantrell, 2009). That is why a firmly developed individual service orientation becomes basic element in the development of SI as a form of spiritual capital at the organizational level (Middlebrooks & Noghiou, 2007).

There is no one basic construct of service quality too. This situation allowed the variety of evaluation models of service quality. Parasuraman's, Zeithaml's and Berry's (1985) Quality Gap Analysis Model can be assigned to the most appropriate for service quality evaluation. The model provides quality evaluation instrument, known as SERVQUAL methodology. SERVQUAL can also help in pinpointing areas requiring managerial attention and action to improve service quality and might be employed in a management process as the kind of a tool, which are less often researched than the customer quality gap (Urban, 2009).

2. Method

The theoretical interaction model of leader's SI and the service quality (SQ) of organization (Šilingienė, Škerienė, 2014) was used as a framework for empirical research. Two research instruments were used for methodological basis of forming the conceptual interaction model of leader's SI and the SQ of organization: King's (2008) SISRI-24 and Parasuraman's, Zeithaml's and Berry's (1985) SERVQUAL methodology. The formed theoretical model of interaction of leader's SI and SQ of organization is based on compatibility of the both ascertained elements of components of SI of SISRI-24 evaluation instrument and the assessment elements of dimensions of SQ of SERVQUAL methodology. There was identified that three of the four components of SI („Critical existential thinking“ - CET, „Personal meaning production“ - PMP, „Conscious state expansion“ - CSE) are related to four dimensions of SQ assessment („Reliability“, „Assurance“, „Empathy“, „Sensitivity“). Only one component of SI („Transcendental awareness“ - TA) is related with two dimensions („Empathy“, „Sensitivity“) of SQ assessment.

A quantitative research by using a questionnaire-based survey was carried out with the aim to identify empirically the impact of gender for leaders' SI in a context of the SQ of organization. The inclusion criteria for participation in the research – both leaders and their organizations having a special certificate “The strongest in Lithuania 2012” for

the timely and responsible execution of financial commitments. 47 usable questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 78 percent. In this study, we analyzed the respondents' demographic characteristics that could influence the results of the study; such characteristics included age, education, and the experience of management in an organization. The data of the study were processed by applying descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation coefficient. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated by assessing its internal consistency via calculating Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's α of the internal consistency of the SISRI-24 questionnaire was .909, and Cronbach's α of the SERVQUAL service quality model – .926. During statistical analysis, the level of significance was set at $\alpha = .05$. Due to the low number of the respondents in some groups of demographic variables and excessive dispersion of the responses, empirical confirmation of only several statistically significant associations was possible. The obtained results may be interpreted only as showing a trend requiring further empirical verification in a larger population.

3. Results

After the calculation of the correlation coefficients between separate components of SI and SQ, evaluating the influence of gender as an independent variable, the obtained results revealed certain statistically significant correlations. The evaluation of individual characteristics (age, education, and experience of management) from the perspective of male and female participants of the study showed statistically significant differences in their opinions in cases of certain associations. 32 percent of the respondents were male, and 68 percent were female; predominant age – 20-30 year (about 47 percent); about 45 percent of respondents had master degree, and about 30 percent had till 1 year experience of management.

3.1. Gender impact for the links of spiritual intelligence and service quality of organization

The results show that men were found to score more highly than women did. The analysis of the influence of the respondents' male gender as an independent variable on the associations between the components of a leader's SI and the dimensions of the evaluation of SQ showed moderate correlations between the SI component PMP and such dimensions of the evaluation of SQ as "Sensitivity" ($N = 15$; $r = .514$; $p \leq .05$), "Reliability" ($N = 15$; $r = .518$; $p \leq .05$), and "Assurance" ($N = 15$; $r = .539$; $p \leq .05$). The aforementioned statistically significant links confirm the associations of the theoretical model. The predominance of PMP in male leaders indicates that the respondents "used" this component when solving problems, ensuring flexible adaptation of services to consumers ("Sensitivity"), motivating the employees to provide fault-free services ("Reliability"), and understanding that knowledge and competence ("Assurance") contribute to the development of the overall service quality.

Women statistically significantly emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of interaction and communication with others when coordinating different viewpoints (TA; $N = 32$; $r = .449$; $p \leq .05$), as well as setting aims and solving problems (CET; $N = 32$; $r = .383$; $p \leq .05$) for the dependable and accurate provision of the promised service ("Reliability"). Women also emphasized the importance of a deeper understanding of interaction and communication with others (TS; $N = 32$; $r = .393$; $p \leq .05$) as a prerequisite for the ability to empathize with the consumer and to see his or her concerns as one's own ("Empathy"). The aforementioned two statistically significant associations (CET with R and TA with E) confirmed the associations of the theoretical model. The statistically significant link between TA and R revealed a new association that was not included in the theoretical model.

3.2. Demographics factors impact for the links of spiritual intelligence and service quality of organization

The analysis of the questionnaire data according to the respondents' characteristics showed that each characteristic affected the results of the study. The evaluation of individual characteristics (age, education, and experience of management) by male and female respondents showed that their opinions in cases of different associations were statistically significantly different.

Calculations of statistical associations in the dimensions of the evaluation of SI components and SQ in the group of 31-40 year-old male leaders showed a strong association of the SI component PMP with "Reliability" ($N = 6$; $r =$

.868; $p \leq .05$). This indicates that 31-40 year-old male leaders saw importance in the creation and presentation of new visions and missions of an organization, which is based on the motivation of the employees (PMP) and is aimed at increasing the consumers' satisfaction ("Reliability"). The results revealed a statistically significant inverse correlation ($N = 6$; $r = -.853$; $p \leq .05$): in male leaders with a bachelor's degree, the aspiration to empathize with the consumers and to view their preoccupations as one's own ("Empathy") decreased with an increasing understanding of interaction and communication with others (TA).

The influence of independent demographic variables such as age, education, and leadership experience in females revealed additional statistically significant correlations (Table 1). The study showed that for female leaders with a bachelor's degree, the SI component PMP was important. This indicates that long-term learning combined with work results in the creation of one's personal values and meanings on which the experience of daily activities is based. These are the years of search and accumulating experience. The working activity is based on the understanding that dependable and accurate provision of the promised service ("Reliability") is facilitated by respective knowledge and competences ("Assurance"), taking into account good communication and empathizing with the consumer ("Empathy").

Table 1. Demographics factors impact for the links of spiritual intelligence and service quality of organization: female's approach.

Links of SI and SQ components / Demographics	N	Value
Personal meaning production with Reliability / Bachelor	7	.823
Personal meaning production with Assurance/ Bachelor	7	.876
Personal meaning production with Empathy / Bachelor	7	.823
Critical existential thinking with Empathy / Management period 1-2 year	6	.897
Critical existential thinking with Sensitivity / Management period 1-2 year	6	.823
Transcendental awareness with Reliability / Age 20-30 year	19	.480

In case of female leaders with 1-2 years of experience of management, a statistically significant correlation indicated that setting clear aims and having clear and concrete problem-solving techniques as well as the required motivation (CET) helps to set clear service provision standards, also including the adaptation of the services to the consumers' needs ("Sensitivity"). In addition to that, increasing experience of management and PMP improved the ability to empathize with the consumer ("Empathy").

Concerning the opinion of 20-30 year-old women, a statistically significant correlation was found between TA and "Reliability". This indicates that the values that are important to women at that age are related to career. In other words, the search for personal meaning of life is limited because of the need to "ensure" a promising and financially safe future. This requires coordination of different worldviews (TA) in order to ensure timely, dependable, and accurate provision of the promised services to the consumers ("Reliability").

Conclusions

The study provided an empirical substantiation to several statistically significant associations included into the theoretical model of the interaction between a leader's SI and an organization's service quality, evaluating the influence of gender as a variable. The results also revealed a possible new association (between TA and "Reliability").

Gender's impact for the links of spiritual intelligence and service quality of organization was identified. Men were found to score more highly than women did. Concerning men's opinions, the statistically significant associations found in the study revealed the male respondents' orientation towards the results and their ability to issue directions, while empathizing with the clients was not a characteristic attribute. Meanwhile, the analysis of the female respondents' opinions revealed the importance of interaction and communication to ensure that the clients receive the promised services, as well as empathy with the clients on the organizational level.

Demographics other than gender (age, education and experience of management) emerge as more significant influences on the leaders' spiritual intelligence in the context of service quality of organization and presented detailed explanation of the identified links. In men, age as a demographic factor was associated with the understanding that the achievement of the desired results requires motivation of the colleagues, whereas in females, age was associated with the understanding of the importance of a consensus. Bachelor's degree in males seemed to limit empathy with the clients, while in females it revealed the formation of the system of work-related values. In women, leadership experience was associated with strategic thinking based on the sense of identity.

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